



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 19, 2002

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Michigan Schools To Receive Millions Of Dollars To Support Wireless Technology

Improved student achievement and access to 21st century learning tools will be reality in school districts located in five separate regions across the state, thanks to a multimillion dollar state program announced by leaders today.

Winning applicants for the Learning Without Limits (LWL) program, developed by the Michigan Department of Education, the Michigan Legislature, and Michigan Virtual University, were awarded the grants after undergoing an extensive state competitive grant program.

LWL's vision is to implement technology demonstration sites in Michigan school districts and eventually expand the programs across the state to achieve one-to-one access to wireless computing in all Michigan schools.

The LWL grants were awarded through a competitive application process. School districts were expected to demonstrate how wireless computing technologies and applications could improve education in their schools.

"This program is the first step toward providing every Michigan student with a technology-rich environment in which learning in the Information Age will be the primary goal," said Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Watkins. "An Information Age education has the potential to individualize instruction, improve learning, and foster critical thinking for all students. I applaud the efforts of Speaker Johnson as we all strive to ensure that our children are equipped to succeed in the 21st century."

Watkins said LWL's goals are also in alignment with the State Board of Education's Embracing the Information Age task force goals, approved earlier this year. The task force's report can be found at www.michigan.gov/mde.

The Michigan Legislature allocated \$3.5 million this past spring, to be matched with \$6 million in federal grants from the Department of Education, for the program.

"Every student deserves a seat in the front row, and new technology makes that possible," said Johnson, R-LeRoy. "Our plan allows kids to learn anytime, anywhere – without limits. The search for knowledge goes beyond the traditional classroom.

"Many schools are moving boldly into the future, and the state as a whole should do the same. Wireless technology is a glimpse of the American school of the future, where classrooms transcend walls. It's the right thing to do, and I am determined to get it done. I am happy to include these schools in our Learning Without Limits program."

Johnson first introduced the concept of wireless Internet access in the classroom in November 2001. Since then, he has traveled around the state visiting schools that are already using technology in the classroom. He set up a 30-member advisory board, and began partnerships with the state Department of Education and Michigan Virtual University to help administer the program.

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As part of the grant selection process, school districts were encouraged to form cohesive partnerships with

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their Intermediate School Districts, a college or university, a technology company, or local businesses.

The partners will assist the district with planning and research, technology support services, teacher professional development, curriculum procurement, evaluation and assessment, as well as information dissemination activities to share best practices.

“There were 94 separate proposals totaling more than \$100 million in concepts for wireless technology programs, demonstrating the innovative and creative potential of our K-12 community across the state,” said David A. Spencer, Ed.D., president of Michigan Virtual University. “It is our hope that there will be dramatic interest in expanding student-centered wireless initiative into the next few years.”

Michigan Virtual University will act as the coordinating agency, providing assistance to the districts to ensure the success of their projects. MVU is a private, nonprofit corporation established in 1998 by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to expand online learning opportunities to Michigan citizens.

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